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00917 SALT

Lloyd N. Cutler

The Case for SALT II

My model for brevity is a British solicitor who was my colleague on a panel of lawyers in London. When his turn came, he said his topic was to compare the antitrust laws of Britain, Germany and France. He said:

"I shall do it in three sentences:

"In Britain, anything that is not expressly forbidden is allowed.

"In Germany, anything that is not expressly allowed is forbidden.

"In France, everything is forbidden, but almost anything can be arranged."

I cannot present the case for SALT in three topic sentences, but I can do it in four. All of them are related to our national defense.

1) If your principal concern is to maintain U.S. strategic equivalence, we have a better chance of doing so with SALT II than without it.

2) If your principal concern is to maintain the combat efficiency and readiness of our non-nuclear forces, we have a better chance of doing so with SALT II than without it.

3) If your principal concern is strengthening the resolve and the nuclear and conventional capability of the NATO alliance, we have a better chance of doing so with SALT II than without it.

4) If your principal concern is to get on with deeper cuts in the nuclear arsenals of both sides than SALT II itself achieves, we have a better chance of doing so with SALT II than without it.

The secretary of defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the commander of the Strategic Air Command believe we have a better chance to maintain strategic equivalence with SALT II than without it. They have three main reasons:

- SALT II's limits (and those of the protocol) do not bar the United States from carrying out any strategic weapons program the Joint Chiefs now plan, within the time span they now plan.

- SALT II's limits will restrain the Soviet Union. At their present rate of launcher construction and conversion, the Soviets could readily surpass the various launcher ceilings before 1985. At their present rate of missile development, they could readily deploy more than one new light missile type by 1985, and they could readily deploy MIRVed heavy missiles with more than 10 warheads each by 1985.

- Without SALT II's provisions to assist verification, we would know much less about what the Soviets are actually doing than if SALT II were in effect. Most important, the Soviets could conceal their new developments in ways SALT II forbids—for example, by encrypting all the telemetry on each missile test.

For these three reasons, it will be more difficult to maintain strategic equivalence without SALT II than with it. Without it, the Soviets can add more to the power of their own forces, widen any advantage they may achieve in the early 1980s and conceal from us what they are doing. All this will lengthen the time and increase both the cost to us and the uncertainty of maintaining parity.

The strength and readiness of our non-nuclear forces are primarily a function of the size of the defense budget. Our nuclear forces are only 10 to 15 percent of that budget and, when the budget comes out too low, it is the conventional forces that suffer.

Part of this is due to the budget-balancing imperative that must motivate all presidents, but most of the responsibility lies on the floor of Congress.

The writer is counsel to the president.

Over the past 10 years, Congress has cut defense appropriations some \$40 billion below what presidents have requested.

Ratification of SALT will help upgrade our conventional forces in two ways. First, achieving the required 87 votes depends on forging a new consensus in the Senate between those who will accept SALT II in order to win support for greater defense expenditures and those who will accept greater defense expenditures in order to win support for SALT II. This consensus is likely to shatter in the aftermath of a failure to ratify SALT II. Second, whatever the level of the defense budget, more of it would have to go into strategic nuclear weapons, if SALT II were not ratified, in order to keep up with the additional Soviet nuclear buildup that would then occur. Whatever the level of defense expenditures, approval of SALT II will free up more of the available defense resources for conventional forces.

If there is any issue that commands a consensus

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of the Senate, it is the support and strengthening of the NATO alliance and its military capability—nuclear and conventional. Failure to ratify SALT would have the general impact of weakening America's position of leadership in the alliance. As Helmut Schmidt said in his recent Economist interview, how can NATO depend on the leadership and the commitments of a nation that negotiates a major military treaty over a seven-year period under three administrations of both parties, and then cannot obtain the approval of its own legislature?

Failure to ratify would also have an adverse impact on NATO's actions to deploy in Europe modernized and longer-range U.S. nuclear weapons systems, so as to offset the threat of the Soviet SS20. For the NATO governments in Europe, a decision to deploy under American control nuclear weapons capable of reaching targets in the Soviet Union is a political decision of great internal and external consequence. For them, the decision to deploy the new weapons is justifiable on two parallel grounds: military needs, and as the first step in a plan to negotiate theater nuclear weapon limitations. These limitations would be in the context of SALT III, alongside the further intercontinental limitations that will also be part of SALT III. But such a plan depends upon the existence of SALT II. That is one reason the heads of so many European governments have publicly and privately urged the ratification of SALT II.

SALT II does not cut the existing strategic arsenals very deeply. But it does ban completely many systems now on the drawing boards, and it places substantial limits on MIRVing, new types and other avenues of breakout and proliferation.

Above all, it lays the basic groundwork for further cuts in SALT III. I would liken the SALT II treaty to a Wall Street bond indenture. It contains all the critical definitions, all the warranties and covenants, all the events of default, all the procedures for notice and consultation. Once this basic indenture is in place—whether for a \$100 million bond issue or for launcher ceilings and sub-ceilings of 2,400, 1,320 and 1,200—it is a relatively simple matter to negotiate an increase in the size of the bond issue or a decrease in the level of the launcher ceilings.

But if we have no SALT II, no basic bond indenture, then the future negotiation of agreements on lower ceilings will be incomparably more difficult. As in SALT II, agreement on any one point will depend on agreement on all other points. All the definitions, all the counting and non-concealment rules will have to be traded out again.

Without SALT II in place, an agreement on deeper cuts would probably take many more years to achieve.

